

CAPE HATTERAS LIGHTHOUSE,
PRINCIPAL KEEPER'S DWELLING
Point of Cape Hatteras,
access road from Rt. 12
Cape Hatteras National Seashore
Buxton
Dare County
North Carolina

HABS NO. NC-357-B

HABS
NC,
28-BUXT,
1-0.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CAPE HATTERAS LIGHTHOUSE, PRINCIPAL KEEPER'S DWELLING
HABS NO. NC-357-B

Location: Point of Cape Hatteras, access from Rt. 12, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Buxton, Dare County, North Carolina

Present Owner: National Park Service, under the direction of the Superintendent of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Rt. 1, Box 675, Manteo, North Carolina

Present Occupant: National Park Service

Present Use: Currently undergoing restoration for use as a house museum to interpret the life of the lighthouse keeper at Cape Hatteras

Significance: The Principal Keeper's Dwelling is significant as an existing example of the type of quarters erected for the lighthouse keepers during the late-19th century. It is the latest of two keeper's dwellings on site. It was built in 1870, during the construction of the new (current) lighthouse tower, using surplus materials. As an integral part of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse site, it conveys a sense of the lifestyle and history of lighthouse keepers.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1870-71. The principal keeper's dwelling was begun in November of 1870. According to the Annual Reports of the Lighthouse Board for 1871, "In addition to the finishing of the new tower, a brick dwelling for the principal keeper of the light-station was built and inclosed in a neat picket fence."
2. Architect: As with all lighthouse-related structures of this period, standardized drawings were prepared through the Lighthouse Board and erected through the regional offices, under the direction of the District Engineer, in this case, the 5th district headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland.

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3. Original and subsequent owners: A four acre lot was purchased by the United States of America from William Jennett et al in February 1801 to which was later added approximately 40 acres adjoining, purchased from Pharoah Farrow in 1820. Since that time it has always been the property of the Federal Government, under the direction of various agencies responsible for aids to navigation. It came under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service in 1935, where it remains.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The construction was undertaken under the direction of Dexter Stetson, the foreman sent by the District Engineer to oversee the construction of the new lighthouse tower. The brick, etc. used was surplus material from the light tower.

5. Original plans and construction: The original plans for the "Keeper's Dwelling at Cape Hatteras L.St., N.C." appear on a single sheet and include front and side elevations, a sectional, and floor plans for the basement, first and second floors. The are simply marked, "5th District, Baltimore, Md". The plans show a front gabled main block one room wide and two deep- a living room to the front and a bedroom to the rear, bisected by a stairway- with a kitchen ell to the side. The plans were said to be the same as those used for the keeper's house at Leading Point.

6. Alterations and additions: A two story frame addition was built in the area forming the ell of the main block and kitchen ell, enlarging the living room and bedroom above. A one-story porch was added to the east of this addition to line up with the kitchen addition. A small, one-story frame extension was added to the east end of the kitchen to form a vestibule and utility room. The west end of the second floor, north bedroom was partitioned off to create a bathroom, closet and stair connecting the bath to the intermediate landing off the main stairway.

B. Historical Context:

Under an act of Congress, approved March 3rd 1868, \$80,000 was appropriated to construct a new light tower at Cape Hatteras. It had been determined that the original tower, constructed in 1803 and raised in 1854, was still inadequate as an aid to navigation. In addition, it was in such poor shape that due to the cost

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of repairs, it seemed more feasible to replace it. Thus, construction of a new tower began in 1870. Also inadequate was the current keeper's quarters which was a double dwelling, built to house the principal and assistant keeper and their families. However, a third keeper had been assigned to Cape Hatteras, overcrowding the existing quarters. Therefore, as the new light tower was nearing completion in November of 1870, the Engineer of the 5th District requested permission from the Lighthouse Board to use the surplus brick and lumber on site to erect a new keeper's dwelling.

The Lighthouse Board agreed to the request and two weeks later plans for a four-room-and-kitchen keeper's quarters arrived from the District Engineer's office in Baltimore, Maryland. According to the Annual Reports, by the end of December of 1870 the first floor of the structure had been laid, the doors and windows set, and the brickwork carried up five feet. A month later the brickwork was complete and the carpenters were putting on the roof. In February the dwelling was shingled, lath-and-plastered and the floors laid. The structure was completed in March.

(For more information on the historical context of the keeper's dwellings at Cape Hatteras see, CAPE HATTERAS LIGHTHOUSE, DOUBLE KEEPER'S DWELLING, HABS NO. NC-357-A).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The principal keeper's dwelling is a vernacular, Victorian-era dwelling. Its details are understated, however, the steep-pitched, gable front roof with overhanging eaves and decorative brickwork in the gable end, give it characteristics of the Gothic Revival Cottage.

2. Condition of fabric: The dwelling is in good condition and is currently undergoing restoration and repair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This is a one-and-a-half story, rectangularly-shaped, front-gabled main block with a one-story kitchen ell. A two-story addition was made between

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the main block and the ell, squaring out the rear.

2. Foundation: The foundation is of brick. There is no basement under the house.

3. Walls: The walls are of brick laid in Common Bond (5:1). A brick water table extends slightly. There is decorative brickwork in the gable ends of the main block--a bargeboard-like extension in a sawtooth pattern. There is also a wood frame addition.

4. Porches, stoops: There are two porches. One is located at the south gable-front of the main block. It has a hipped roof covered with wood shingles and is supported by chamfered posts and a balustrade in an X-pattern. A wooden floor rests on brick piers. It covers all three front bays. There is also a porch which runs the length of the east side of the brick kitchen wing and rear frame addition. It has a hipped roof covered with raised seam metal and is supported by plain squared posts, without balustrade, resting on a wooden floor.

5. Chimneys: There are three brick chimneys, two on the main block and one on the kitchen wing. Those on the main block are exterior chimneys, with the chimney block at the floor level only, and the stack extending from there (fireplace on first floor only). One chimney is located to the front of the west side wall, and the other to the center of the rear gable end. The rear chimney has an vaulted chimney cap. The kitchen ell has an interior end chimney.

6. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main entry is to the center of the gable end of the main block. The doorway is void of ornamentation with a four panel door. There is a similar doorway at the east elevation of the kitchen wing. A more elaborate doorway was added in the rear frame addition, which faces east towards the Atlantic Ocean. It has four light sidelights with a panel below.

b. Windows: The dwelling is lit by six-over-six-light sash windows, with flat arched brick lintels over some windows only. There are paired windows in the front gable end of the main block and over the new entry in the frame addition. All windows have shutters (louvered in the main block).

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7. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main block has a front-gabled roof covered with wooden shingles. The kitchen ell has a shed roof which attaches to the gable roof of the two-story frame addition (with a slight kick in the roof at this junction).

b. Cornice, eaves: The roof has an unornamented, narrow boxed cornice with overhanging eaves.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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Fall 1989

IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, Principal Keeper's Quarters was part of the cooperative project between the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), of the National Park Service, Robert J. Kapsch, chief and the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service, Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The WASO project leader was Paul Dolinsky, Principal Architect for HABS. Drawings were executed by: Frederick J. Lindstrom, Supervisory Architect HABS; Timothy A. Buehner, Architect HABS; Judith E. Collins, Architectural Technician, Auburn University; and Thomas P. Forde, Jr., Architectural Technician, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Large format photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS Photographer. The historical report and bibliography was prepared by HABS Historian, Catherine C. Lavoie. The project was begun in September of 1989.